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UNCLAS MANILA 004689

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS
PASS TO AMERICAN BATTLE MEMORIAL CEMETERY

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [RP](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR HOSTS VETERANS DAY COMMEMORATION AT MANILA
AMERICAN CEMETERY

11. (U) Summary: On November 11, 2006, the Ambassador hosted the Mission's Veteran's Day Commemoration at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial. Secretary of Foreign Affairs Romulo represented the Government of the Philippines as representatives of nine allied missions, two veterans' organizations and the U.S. Military laid wreaths in a solemn ceremony. Secretary Romulo spontaneously decided to tour the memorial after the ceremony and was deeply moved by the tranquil, one hundred fifty-two acre, gardens of stone under the Narra trees on the highest ground in Manila. End Summary.

The Ceremony

12. (U) Three hundred guests witnessed the Marine Security Detachment and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Honor Guard lay 13 wreaths to honor 17,206 interred men and women who gave their lives in the Pacific Theater during World War II. As an AFP sergeant called cadence U.S. Marines and AFP soldiers executed a letter-perfect series of maneuvers marching shoulder to shoulder. The ceremony concluded with AFP buglers playing Echo Taps and a twenty-one gun salute to the fallen. Ambassador Kenney called the ceremony, "dignified, thoughtful, and a moving tribute to all our veterans."

Secretary Romulo's Participation

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13. (U) Secretary Romulo laid the first wreath, in a ceremony led by the U.S. Director of Veterans Affairs at Embassy Manila. Secretary Romulo told the Ambassador, "that it was the perfect way to remember those who had sacrificed for our freedom." He also commented "The sight of the U.S. Marines and Filipino soldiers marching together in perfect step was a great symbol of our partnership." Several of the other Manila-based Ambassadors made similar comments. The event was covered by local press, including a photo of an AFP bugler alone in the stone gallery.

14. (U) After the ceremony, Secretary Romulo decided to walk the grounds, and the galleries, bearing witness to the white crosses and stars of David aligned row on row. As he walked the galleries, he spent a long time reading some of the 36,285 names of the missing and absorbing the maps that depicted the history of the liberation of the Philippine archipelago and war in the Pacific. Before the Secretary left, he told the Ambassador it had been too long since he

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had been there and he had forgotten how wonderful it was as a

peaceful place and as a place where one could "lose yourself in history."

Kenney